



MARION COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

TERRY R. CURRY, PROSECUTOR

251 E. OHIO ST., SUITE 160

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204

PHONE (317) 327-3522 • FAX (317) 327-3531

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Contacts:

Peg McLeish (317) 327-5543; peg.mcleish@indy.gov

A.J. Deer (317) 327-5493; anthony.deer@indy.gov

DPW employees convicted for stealing metal from city facility

Three employees pleaded guilty to scrapping municipal vehicle parts for cash

(Indianapolis, Ind.) -- Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry announced today that three employees of the City of Indianapolis Department of Public Works have pleaded guilty and been sentenced for their involvement in theft of scrap metal from a city facility. David Herre and Terry Lee pleaded guilty to Theft and Official Misconduct and Edward Lawson pleaded guilty to Theft for taking scrap metal while working as mechanics at the Department of Public Works Belmont facility and selling the metal at local scrap processors. Each of the three defendants received a one year suspended sentence with 80 hours of community service and restitution to the city.

"Employee theft causes significant loss for businesses, and in cases such as this, taxpayer funded agencies. I encourage anyone to report employee theft to a police agency and hold the individual responsible," Prosecutor Curry stated.

Herre, Lee, and Lawson took materials and parts including brake drums, brake rotors, fire apparatus pumps, and copper wire from the city facility. Department of Public Works supervisors became suspicious after discrepancies were noted in the amount of proceeds generated from the sale of scrap vehicle parts at the Belmont facility for the past three years. In the various facilities' reports of the amount of scrapped weight and proceeds, the Belmont facility produced less reported scrap tonnage and proceeds as compared to the other facilities despite being a much larger facility whose mission is to service and repair large vehicles and fire apparatus vehicles.

"This case is an example of increased efforts to monitor scrap metal sales and awareness by law enforcement of the impact of metal theft," Prosecutor Curry added. "We appreciate the new state reporting and tracking requirements for scrap yards and pawn shops and the assistance those requirements have provided for our investigations."

An investigation by the Marion County Prosecutor's Grand Jury Division traced evidence of the metal theft and sales beginning in August 2013 following an initial investigation by IMPD's Special Investigation Unit. Investigators employed an online database used by law enforcement to recover stolen property and solve crimes through transactions reported by recycling facilities, pawn shops, scrap metal processors, and online listings such as eBay. Each transaction reported in the system includes a description of the transaction, a photo of the seller and the item or items sold, and information from the seller's driver's license.

A charge of a crime is merely an accusation, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.